

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

156 That every Nuer considers himself as good as his neighbour is
181 evident in their every movement. They strut about like lords of
the earth, which, indeed, they consider themselves to be. There
[186] is no master and no servant in their society, but only equals who
regard themselves as God's noblest creation. Their respect for
one another contrasts with their contempt for all other peoples.
Among themselves even the suspicion of an order rises a man and
he either does not carry it out or he carries it out in a casual and
dilatatory manner that is more insulting than a refusal. When a
[576] Nuer wants his fellows to do something he asks it as a favour to
a kinsman, saying, 'Son of my mother, do so-and-so', or he includes
himself in the command and says: 'Let us depart', 'Let the people
return home', and so forth. In his daily relations with his fellows
a man shows respect to his elders, to his 'fathers', and to certain
persons of ritual status, within the circuit of its reference, so long
as they do not infringe on his independence, but he will not submit
to any authority which clashes with his own interests and he does
not consider himself bound to obey any one. I was once discussing
the Shilluk with a Nuer who had visited their country, and he
remarked, 'They have one big chief, but we have not. This chief
can send for a man and demand a cow or he can cut a man's throat.
Whoever saw a Nuer do such a thing? What Nuer ever came
when some one sent for him or paid any one a cow?'

181 I found Nuer pride an increasing source of amazement. It is
629 as remarkable as their constant aloofness and reticence. I have
already described how Nuer would interrupt my inquiries. I
mention here three incidents typical of the cavalier way in which
they treated me. On one occasion I asked the way to a certain
place and was deliberately deceived. I returned in chagrin to
camp and asked the people why they had told me the wrong way.
One of them replied, 'You are a foreigner, why should we tell you
the right way? Even if a Nuer who was a stranger asked us the
way we should say to him, "You continue straight along that path",
but we would not tell him that the path forked. Why should we
tell him? But you are now a member of our camp and you are
kind to our children, so we will tell you the right way in future.'

576 In this same camp, at the end of my stay, when I was sick and
being removed by steamer, I asked the people to carry my tent
and belongings to the river's edge. They refused, and my servant,
a Nuer youth, and I had to do it ourselves. When I asked him
why the people were churlish, he replied, 'You told them to carry
your belongings to the river. That is why they refused. If you had
asked them, saying, "My mother's sons, assist me", they would
not have refused.'

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On one occasion some men gave me information about their lineages. Next day these same men paid me a visit and one of them asked me, 'What we told you yesterday, did you believe it?' When I replied that I had believed it they roared with laughter and called to others to come and share the joke. Then one of them said, 'Listen, what we told you yesterday was all nonsense. Now we will tell you correctly.' I could relate many such stories.

The Nuer have been rightly described as dour, and they are often gruff and curt to one another and especially to strangers. But if they are approached without a suggestion of superiority they do not decline friendship, and in misfortune and sickness they show themselves kind and gentle. At such moments they permit themselves to show sympathy which their pride stifles at other times, for even when Nuer approve of one they cannot bear that one shall see it and are the more truculent to hide their friendliness. Never are they truckling or sycophantic. When a Nuer wants a gift he asks for it straight out, and if you refuse it he remains in good humour. Their only test of character is whether one can stand up for oneself. One rises in Nuer estimation the more one lives their kind of life and accepts their values.

If you wish to live among the Nuer you must do so on their terms, which means that you must treat them as a kind of kinsmen and they will then treat you as a kind of kinsman. Rights, privileges, and obligations are determined by kinship. Either a man is a kinsman, actually or by fiction, or he is a person to whom you have no reciprocal obligations and whom you treat as a potential enemy. Every one in a man's village and district counts in one way or another as a kinsman, if only by linguistic assimilation, so that, except for an occasional homeless and despised wanderer, a Nuer only associates with people whose behaviour to him is on a kinship pattern.

Kinsmen must assist one another, and if one has a surplus of a good thing he must share it with his neighbours. Consequently no Nuer ever has a surplus. But the European has a surplus and if his possessions are of any use to the Nuer he ought, in their opinion, to share them with the people among whom he is living. Travellers have often remarked that the Nuer have plagued them for gifts. They beg from one another with equal persistence. No Nuer is expected to part with his cattle or household property and, except in special circumstances, these would not be asked for. But were a man to possess several spears or hoes or other such objects he would inevitably lose them. Deng, a Government chief and a man of standing, told me, as I was leaving his village on the Pibor River, that he was grateful for the fishing spears I had distributed

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Jikany where, I was told, a Dinka could never lose his inferior status, which was transmitted to his descendants. The acceptance of a permanent member of a community as equal to an aristocrat conforms to the general tendency among the Nuer for descent to be subordinated to community, a tendency which we shall constantly stress.

We again emphasize the point to which we drew attention in the section on law, that the degree of responsibility acknowledged for a tort, the chances of compensation being offered for it, and the amount of compensation paid, depend on the relations of the persons concerned in social structure. Thus, if a man kills an unadopted Dinka of his own household, who was not born in Nuerland, there is no redress, but his household will protect their Dinka against outsiders and will avenge his death at their hands. Dol, who is himself of Dinka descent, told me: 'If you curse a Dinka of your household, well, you curse him, that is all. If he is angry you tell him that you will kill him and that nothing will happen. You will merely clean your spear on the ground and hang it up. But if another man curses a Dinka of your household you fight him, for the Dinka is your brother. You ask the man whether he is your Dinka or his Dinka.'

The position of a Dinka in his own domestic circle is thus different from his position in relation to members of a wider group. He is only a *jaang* to the joint family which considers him 'their man.' To people standing outside this joint family he is a member of that *gol*, joint family, and it is not their business to differentiate his status within it. I was told that if an outsider called such a Dinka '*jaang*', the sons of the man who had captured him would resent the insult and might start a fight to wipe it out, for to them he is '*demar*', 'my brother', in relation to outsiders. They ask, 'Who is a *jaang*? Did your father seize him or did ours?' The acceptance of Dinka born in Nuerland as full members of Nuer households, hamlets, and villages is even more pronounced.

The status of Dinka is thus a relative one, and a man may be considered to belong to this category in one situation and not in another. This is obviously the case in social life generally, because ordinarily no one differentiates a man of Dinka descent from a man of Nuer descent, but we believe that it was also the

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By adoption Dinka men are grafted on to the lineage of their captors. They trace their ascent up the lineage to its ancestor and they become a new point of its growth. The fusion is complete and final. The spirits of the lineage become their spirits, its ghosts become their ghosts, and its spear-name and honorific name become their symbols. Indeed it is almost impossible without a prolonged stay in a Nuer village or camp to discover who are and who are not of pure Nuer origin. I have for weeks considered men to be true Nuer, whereas they were descended from captured Dinka, for a man whose Dinka grandfather had been adopted into a Nuer lineage regards himself as being just as much a member of the lineage as the man whose grandfather adopted his grandsire, and he is so regarded by other members of the lineage and by persons not of it. Thus, when a man gives his descent from E through D and C, and another man gives his descent from E through J and K, one naturally assumed that D and J were sons of E. There is no means of knowing that, in fact, J was a captured Dinka who was adopted into the lineage, unless someone volunteers the information—a most unlikely happening in Nuerland. Moreover, it is impolite to ask strangers whether their grandfathers were captured Dinka, and, even if they were of Dinka origin, they would not readily say so. One can, of course, always ask other people; but only those who are members of the same lineage are likely to be fully acquainted with the man's ancestry, and they, in all probability, will not tell one if he is of Dinka origin, for he is their agnatic kinsman as far as outsiders are concerned.

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A very large number of Dinka in all tribes have been incorporated by adoption into Nuer lineages. Since, as mentioned later, adopted Dinka and their descendants can marry into collateral lineages, it would not be accurate to say that they are adopted into clans. Probably most captured Dinka were adopted into Nuer lineages, but there are also many Dinka lineages descended from men who came of their own free will to settle in Nuerland, either to escape famine, largely caused by Nuer raiding, in their own country, to visit captured sisters, or to reoccupy the sites from which Nuer raids had ousted them. Such immigrants were unmolested and were permitted to settle or return to Dinkaland as they might choose. A Dinka who decided to settle

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● 609 became some Nuer's *jaang*, his Dinka, and *rende*, his man, and the Nuer would give him an ox and maybe a cow or two when he had given proof of his fidelity and attachment to his new home. I was told that he might even be given a daughter of the house in marriage without payment of bride-wealth if she were blind or lame and no Nuer would contemplate taking her as a bride. Often a widow lives in concubinage with such a Dinka, who thus obtains a 'wife' in the sense of cook, housekeeper, and mate; and even if the children she may bear him do not count as his descendants he can gain their affection. If a Dinka settles at the home of the husband of his sister, the husband may give him a cow or two in acknowledgement of affinity.

There must also have been pockets of the original Dinka occupants of country overrun by the Nuer who submitted and gave up their language and habits in favour of those of the Nuer. At any rate, there are to-day in all tribes many small Dinka lineages, and villages are often called after them. Such lineages are numerically preponderant in the communities where I spent most of my time, Yakwac camp and Nyueny village. The way in which these lineages are woven into the lineage texture of the dominant clan of the tribe is discussed in the next two sections.

Here we summarize points which have already emerged from our description of the position of Dinka in relation to Nuer. (1) *Jaang*, Dinka, has many meanings: any foreigners whom the Nuer habitually raid; Dinka living in Dinkaland and raided by Nuer; Dinka of unabsorbed pockets in Nuerland or on its confines; recent Dinka immigrants; certain clans which are said to be Dinka in origin, e.g. the GAATGANKIIR; members of small Dinka lineages which are Nuer in every character except in origin; descendants of adopted Dinka; adopted Dinka. One can only judge the meaning Nuer attach to the word by its context and the tone in which it is spoken. (2) It is only those Dinka who are regarded as members of a Nuer tribe who concern our present discussion. Their status is relative to the social situation in which the question of status arises, and cannot be rigidly defined. (3) Nuer conquest has not led to a class or symbiotic system, but, by the custom of adoption, has absorbed the conquered Dinka into its kinship system, and through

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the kinship system has admitted them into its political structure on a basis of equality.

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A large number of Dinka who were not captured as children are not adopted into Nuer lineages, and Nuer strangers cannot be adopted into lineages of the dominant clan or into any other Nuer lineages. Nevertheless, members of all local communities, whilst they see themselves as distinct segments in relation to other local segments, express their relations to one another in terms of kinship. This is brought about by intermarriage.

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We mention the rules of exogamy as briefly as possible and only in so far as they have a direct bearing on the political system. Nuer generally marry within their tribe, though they sometimes marry women of other tribes, especially if they live near the border. Sometimes, also, a man marries in one tribe and then, taking his wife and family with him, goes to live in another tribe. In recent times there have been occasional marriages with the Ngok, and possibly with other Dinka tribes. There are no exogamous rules based on locality. They are determined by lineage and kinship values. A man may not marry into his clan and, *a fortiori*, into his lineage. In most clans a man may marry into his mother's clan, but not into her maximal lineage, though this rule is less exact. A man may not marry any woman to whom he is in any way closely related. A Dinka adopted into a lineage may not marry into that lineage, but may marry into collateral lineages of the same clan.

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The rules of exogamy have been cursorily described. Nevertheless we consider them important, for the values which chiefly regulate behaviour between one person and another in Nuer society are kinship values. Nuer rules of exogamy break down the exclusiveness of agnatic groups by compelling their members to marry outside them, and thereby to create new kinship ties. As the rules also forbid marriage between near cognates, a small local community like a village rapidly becomes a network of kinship ties and its members are compelled to find mates outside it. Any stranger who enters the village, if he is not already related to most of its members, rapidly enters into affinal relations with them and his children become their kinsmen. Consequently the population of a Nuer village or cattle camp

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and as there must be such a link if they live in the same community, owing to the rules of exogamy, it follows that people who live together are all *gaat nyiel* to one another. However, it is in relation to the dominant lineage of a community that the concept is mainly employed and is politically important. When people are not members of this lineage it is stressed that they are *gaat nyiel* to it. Nuer of other clans can never more closely identify themselves with the dominant lineage, because, for ritual reasons, they must remain autonomous units, but politically they accrete themselves to it through this kinship category. Moreover, outside ritual situations, being *gaat nyiel* to a dominant lineage gives people complete equality with it, and their accretion to it is often expressed in terms of lineage structure, so that a man will often give his ascent to the woman of the dominant lineage who bore one of his ancestors, and thus graft himself, through her, on to their tree of descent; though this is more usually done by Dinka than by Nuer. It is, however, the common practice for children of strangers who have been brought up at the home of their maternal kinsmen, who are aristocrats, to regard themselves as members of their mother's lineage, except in ceremonial situations, and to consider its members, rather than their father's lineage, as their true kinsmen.

Dinka who have not been adopted commonly trace their ascent to a female Nuer forebear and through her they graft themselves into a Nuer lineage and are accepted as members of it in ordinary social relations. Thus a Dinka often gives his ascent to the dominant lineage of his community through a woman, and sometimes through two or three female links, and though this is generally evident from female prefixes it cannot always be known. These Dinka individuals incorporate themselves into the structure of a Nuer lineage through their mothers, since they have no lineage structure of their own. This is different from the stressing of a female link (*gaat nyiel*) which unites a group of Nuer strangers or of Dinka to the dominant lineage of their tribal section and also from matrilineal modes of reckoning descent due to matrilineal conditions of residence, which may be temporary.

Owing to exogamous rules lineages are thus linked by

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621 innumerable cognatic ties, so that however many lineages there may be in a local community their members are all related to one another by some kind of cognation and affinity. A lineage remains an exclusive agnatic group only in ritual situations. In other situations it is merged in the community, and cognation (war) takes the place of lineage agnation (*betk*) as the value through which people living together express their relations to one another. The agnatic structure of the dominant lineage is not stressed in ordinary social relations, but only on a political plane where relations between territorial segments are concerned, for the assimilation of territorial segments to segments of the dominant lineage means that the interrelations of the one are expressed in terms of the other.

In every small tribal segment there is a lineage of the dominant clan of the tribe associated with it, and the members of the segment are joined to this lineage by adoption, cognatic kinship, or kinship fictions, in such a way that one may speak of them as an accretion around a lineage nucleus. As these different nuclei are lineages of the same clan, or, as we shall see in the next section, assimilated to it, the structure of the dominant clan is to the political system like the anatomical structure to the system of an organism.

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000 We have seen how Dinka and strangers are linked to the framework of the dominant clan by adoption and cognation and how these links form an embracing kinship system which provides the non-political texture of the political system. Kinship values are the strongest sentiments and norms in Nuer society and all social interrelations tend to be expressed in a kinship idiom. Adoption and the assimilation of cognatic to agnatic ties are two ways in which community relations are translated into kinship relations: in which living together forces residential relations into a kinship pattern. A third way is by mythological creation of kinship fictions, and this way is appropriate to relations between dominant lineages and stranger and Dinka groups, living with them in the same tribal segments, which are too large and occupy too distinct a territory for incorporation by either of the other two methods. It is the way

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in which large pockets of strangers and Dinka are incorporated into the conceptual scheme of a tribe.

It has frequently been emphasized that political relations are often expressed in speech as lineage relations, in the sense that one talks of a local community as though it were a lineage, thereby assimilating to a dominant lineage those who share the same community life with it; and that lineage relations are often expressed as political relations, in the sense that one talks of a lineage as though it were identical with the local community in which it is only a nucleus, thereby depriving the lineage of its unique agnatic status and giving it a general residential value. In conformity with this way of describing community interrelations, they are personified in myths and derived from personal relationships of a kinship kind.

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We do not propose to give a collection of Nuer myths. We have so far only mentioned one myth explaining group interrelations: that which tells why the Nuer raid the Dinka. There are very few myths of this general kind. Most relate to clans and lineages in their corporate territorialised form and explain their association with one another as tribes and tribal segments, particularly the relations between dominant lineages and large stranger lineages living with them. We are not always able to explain mythological relations by the present-day political system, but this can often be done, and where we fail to do it we attribute our inability to ignorance, especially to ignorance of tribal history.

The two large Lou tribal sections, the Jimac and the JaaJoah which appear on the map on p. 56, but not on the clan tree of the JINACA, the dominant clan of the tribe, on p. 196, are divisions called after the JIMAC and JAAJOAH lineages. They are said to be *geat nyist*, children of daughters of the founder of the JINACA clan, and there is a myth accounting for this maternal link. Denac was said to have had, according to the Lou story, four sons, named Yin, Dak, Bal, and Bany, by one wife, and Nyang and two nameless brothers by a second wife. These wives are sometimes said to have been called Nyagun and Nyamor and the two primary sections of the tribe, Gun and Mor, to be named after them. Nyang's two brothers were eaten by an ogre. When, afterwards, the sons of Denac went fishing, the four sons of one mother went by themselves and Nyang by himself, for he would not accompany his half-

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In every Nuer tribe there are similar stories which explain the relations between the aristocratic clan and large stranger lineages living with it. Other myths explain the relations between these stranger lineages. Thus the lineages living at Nyueny and in neighbouring villages in Leek country, JUAK, NGWOL, JIKUL, &c., are all mythologically related to one another and to the dominant clan of the Leek tribe. These myths also explain the ritual symbols and observances of the lineages mentioned in them.

Actual interrelations of a political kind are thus explained and justified in mythological interrelations, and wherever, as far as we know, large lineages of different clans are politically associated there is a myth bringing their ancestors into some social relationship. This is especially the case between dominant lineages and stranger or Dinka lineages, and the mythological link gives them equality and fraternity in community life, while permitting ritual exclusiveness and intermarriage between them. Complete assimilation is impossible, for there must always be ritual distinction or the clan and lineage systems would collapse. Strangers have to be incorporated into the community of the dominant lineage and excluded from its agnatic structure.

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By adoption, the recognition of the equivalence of cognatic and agnatic ties in community life, and by mythological relationships, all persons in a tribal segment have kinship relationships of some kind to one another and the segments themselves are given a kinship relationship to each other within the political system. Although the categories of *diel*, *ru*, and *jaeng* c. ate social differentiation, it is on a ritual and domestic, rather than on a political, plane and is only indicated in certain situations of social life.

This is evident in the Nuer use of the three words denoting the three statuses. It is a common Nuer practice when addressing people and speaking publicly about them to use words which denote a closer relationship between them and the speaker than their actual relationship. This is commonly done with kinship terms and, also, in defining the status of a person in his tribe. Nuer do not emphasize that a man is a stranger or Dinka by

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alluding to him as such in ordinary social life, for it is in rare situations that his being other than an aristocrat is relevant: to some extent in payment of blood-cattle, in questions of exogamy, and at sacrifices and feasts. A stranger who has made his home with aristocrats is treated as a social equal and regards himself as such. People do not call him a *rai*, for he is a member of their community. They may even refer to him as a *dil* out of politeness. In the same way people do not refer to an adopted Dinka as 'Jaang'; for he is by adoption a brother of aristocrats or of Nuer of other lineages. One would not ordinarily speak of unadopted Dinka residents as 'Jaang', but as 'rai'. Just as strangers tend to be linguistically assimilated to aristocrats, so Dinka tend to be assimilated to strangers, and people speak only of unconquered Dinka of Dinkaland by the contemptuous expression 'Jaang'. Nuer do not make distinctions of status between people who live with them, share their fights, partake of their hospitality, and are members of their community against other communities. Community of living overrides differentiation of descent.

We again emphasize that the designations 'aristocrat', 'stranger', and 'Dinka' in a Nuer tribe are relative terms, being defined by the relations of persons in the social structure in specific situations of social life. A man is a stranger, or Dinka, in reference to a few, mainly ritual, situations, but is not indicated as such on other occasions; and a man is a stranger or Dinka in relation to members of a social group, but is not considered by them to have a differentiated status in relation to another group. A stranger is a stranger to you, your stranger, but is one of you *vis-à-vis* other people. A Dinka is a Dinka to you, your Dinka, but he is your brother *vis-à-vis* other people. In political structure all members of a segment are essentially undifferentiated in its relation to other segments.

How can it be explained that among a people so democratic in sentiment and so ready to express it in violence a clan is given superior status in each tribe? We believe that the facts we have recorded provide an answer in terms of tribal structure. Many Nuer tribes are large in area and population—some of them very large—and they are more than territorial expressions, for we have shown that they have a complex segmentary structure which the Nuer themselves see as a system. As there are no

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KINSHIP AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

before they reach the first ancestor from whom bifurcate collateral lines of descent of the kind they call a *thok dwiel*, a lineage?

A Nuer, when asked about this matter, gave an historical explanation: 'In the days when people scattered, brother and son went raiding and they settled where they raided. Then kinship ceased (*ce mar thok*) and there remained only a lineage relationship (*ce dweth ni bush*). This could only have happened, however, as Nuer themselves say, after some generations had elapsed. Even today descendants of Nuer who settled to the east of the Nile, after raiding the Dinka in what are now the Jikany and Lou tribal areas, sometimes travel to the homes of their forebears to the west of the Nile to receive cattle which are their due on the marriages of the daughters of kinsmen from whose fathers and grandfathers their fathers and grandfathers separated. While the privileges of kinship are thus claimed, the persons concerned cannot be regarded as *jabuthni*, members of collateral lineages. Indeed, in my experience, Nuer do not generally speak of lineages till four or five generations back in patrilineal ascent, and I think also that there are good technical reasons for following Nuer usage in this matter and for not speaking of lineages before at least the third generation is reached.

Although any relative of a man is *mar* to him, the word most frequently refers to close relatives only, and on the paternal side generally implies those persons on the marriage of whose daughters a man can claim a portion of the bridewealth proper, which means an agnatic relationship deriving from any forebear as far back as, but not beyond, the bride's great grandfather. Nuer commonly explain such matters in terms of cattle-rights. Also it is for descendants of the great grandfather that specific kinship terms are used in their primary reference. It is this grouping, in relation to any person, of agnates of three generations in depth that I shall have in mind when I speak of a man's paternal kin.

Beyond this point we enter into the structural relations of the lineage system where the Nuer begin to speak of collectivities of agnates. There is always *buth* between collateral lineages of the same clan and there may also be *buth* between clans, as I have explained in *The Nuer*. Also, a captured Dinka boy may be *lath buthni*, given *buth*, and thereby made a member of his captor's lineage. Groups which have no *buth* have *rul* between them, that is, they are 'strangers'. I omit further discussion about the

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PROPERTY RIGHTS

476 and well beyond the limits of the reciprocal distribution of bridewealth
602 cattle, but I do not wish to exaggerate the extent or effectiveness of
economic reciprocity in the kinship system. In the past as well as
438 the present, grain and other food were bartered for cattle, other animal
stock, and other commodities, and there was considerable trade, which
increased in volume in years of famine. Nowadays, with the introduction
of a money economy, grain is bought with cash either from other
Nuer or from Arab merchants, who, sponsored by the Government,
often import large quantities to meet local shortages.

621 A stranger cannot intrude himself into a community or build his
house and clear his fields without its acceptance. Not only will
• 609 objections be raised which might lead to his ejection, but he could
not hope to gain full membership of the community and the advantages
which follow. This does not, however, usually arise because strangers
are nearly always a welcome addition to the community, which thereby
gains in strength, and because the newcomer can nearly always claim
some previous link arising from kinship, marital ties, or at any rate
close friendship (*matk*), with one or more members of that com-
munity. In any case a form of social relationship will be forged in
the passage of time by intermarriage and adoption into the lineage
structure of the community. A change of residence, if it is permanent,
means also a change of social and political affiliation.

423 For these reasons, because crop production is not an important feature
of their economy, at any rate in many parts of Nuerland, and because,
despite the obvious limitations of flood-free land, there is no great
shortage, there are no complex laws of land tenure. Disputes are
rare, and still more rarely taken before the courts.¹ Thus, though
circumstances may change with the development of agricultural enter-
prise, land tenure is not at present an important or well-defined feature
of Nuer customary law.

Grazing Rights

423 During the rains the cattle are kept in the permanent settlements
233 and quartered in cattle-byres (*luak*), each family unit having its own.
361 The *luak* is the centre of the family group consisting of the head of
the family and his wives, who, each with her children, occupy separate
huts which are clustered around it. Grazing is used communally by
all members of the settlement, and although pastures are limited,
especially at the height of the rains, and although there may be periodic
shortages when the cattle lose condition, no more precise division of
the territory is necessary. Disputes rarely, if ever, arise, and in the
herding of cattle the members of one settlement are united by common

¹ The only form of dispute commonly brought before the courts concerns 'animal trespass', where straying cattle, sheep, or goats damage the crops of neighbours. Compensation is often awarded in such cases.

644 distantly related to them (*riks uñ ho ji bañna okies*). Here they dwell as friends (*wone ngar kō rō*) and slowly forge new relationship by intermarriage (*on mar mat e kōw*).

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621 I believe that there is another Nuer word which means the same as *rai*, namely, *yies*. Thus one speaks of strangers living in the village of *dial* as *yieshies*, "their strangers dwelling in their midst." They are strangers because they have no hereditary status in the *wec* save through their mothers. Nevertheless *rai* and *yies* are objectionable terms by which to address strangers and would not be used without danger of strong words following. In speech they are assimilated to the dominant lineages and in this way the homogeneity and cohesion of the local group is asserted. One does not make a division between people who live with one, share one's cattle camp and village, help one in feuds, and quarter their herds in common pastures. Hence even if a man is a *rai* (or a *yies*) one does not make allusion to the fact in his presence. Still less does one make allusion to a man's Dinka or other non-Nuer parentage by calling him by the offensive term *jaang*. These strangers are accepted as equal members of the *wec*.

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621 One of my informants, Jok, explained modes of Nuer aggregation very clearly. No *dil* (or *rai*) dwells in a social milieu entirely composed of fellow *dil* (*gaat tōw*), for the usual tendency is for *dil* to split up and for the segments to seek political autonomy on their own and found their own social conglomerate in which they will form the aristocratic nucleus. Hence a *wec* has its nucleus of *dil*, and around this nucleus are gathered a host of *rai*, who are often the husbands of daughters and sisters of *dil* who have not left the village of their fathers and brothers on their marriages but whose husbands have built their homesteads in their wives' localities. It is important to bear in mind that these girls cannot marry a *dil* or *rai* but are compelled by exogamous rules to marry into the classes of *rai* and *jaang*. Their children often grow up in the village of their maternal grandfather and his lineage are regarded as their kinsmen while their father's lineage are comparative strangers, and for this reason they tend to trace their descent through their mother rather than through their father and thus hitch on to the genealogical system of the *dil*.

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619 Hence there is always a tendency towards fusion between two lineages who form part of the same tribal section. This is not simply due to the fact that there is often a real or mythological relationship between

DIFFERENTIATION OF STATUS AMONG THE NUER

There are three categories in a Nuer tribe: *diel*, *rul* and *jaang*. 614
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The dominant clan is *diel* and members of other clans settling after the establishment of the dominant lineage are *rul* (strangers). Not every member of a clan lives in a tribe where his clan has a superior status; a man is a *dil* (an aristocrat) only in the tribe in which his clan is dominant, for the status of *diel* derives from residence on land owned by the clan. Prestige, not authority or any particular power, is attached to the *diel*; they are owners of the land, the village sites and pastures. Strangers live on the land through some link with, and the recognition of, the true owners.

A *rul* (stranger) is a Nuer who is not a *dil* in the tribe in which he lives. He may be influential, highly respected and even a *tut* (bull), though not belonging to the aristocratic clan. He may, indeed, group round him an entire village community in spite of the presence of several tribal aristocrats in the same village; in this respect personality and influence may count for more in everyday local affairs than a particular lineage affiliation.⁽¹⁾ In fact, in the everyday life of a village community, the only socially significant difference between aristocrats and strangers is in the assessment of blood cattle, and this is only found among the Jikany tribes. 554
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'Tribal bulls', on the other hand, belonging to a lineage of the dominant clan of a tribe, are far more important in the political system than the *rul* bulls, for they are centres of clusters of kin and are also agnates, each having in relation to the others a structural position in the lineage system of the dominant clan.⁽²⁾ 613
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A Dinka adopted into a joint family is a *jaang* to the people of the family. To people outside the family he is a member of it and his status is not differentiated; he has all the rights and obligations of other members. Only the assessment of his value in blood cattle differentiates him from the Nuer. 597

Strangers may be attached to the dominant clan by adoption or by marriage. [614]

Kinship values are the strongest sentiments and norms in Nuer society, and all social interrelations tend to be expressed in kinship idioms. Since there are no headmen or councils or any of the usual forms of government, it seems that kinship values, combined with the position of the dominant lineage and its linked stranger lineages, are the originising agencies and the means of unity in each community. 602
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The political system of the Nuer is constituted by the relations between territorial segments in the tribal system; cohesion and organisation are achieved through the association of the lineage system with the territorial units. The lines of cleavage tend to coincide, for lineages are 621
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(1) Evans-Pritchard, *Kinship and Local Community among the Nuer*, 1950, p. 370.
(2) *Ibid.*, p. 390.